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Robert E. Dvorak

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EXAMINER

VAN DOREN, BETH

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

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PAPER

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

<b>Office Action Summary</b>	<b>Application No.</b>	<b>Applicant(s)</b>	
	09/760,377	DVORAK ET AL.	
	<b>Examiner</b>	<b>Art Unit</b>	
	BETH VAN DOREN	3623	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

### Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

### Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 11 February 2008.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**.                      2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

### Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 2-15, 20-34, 39-53 and 96-99 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 2-15, 20-34, 39-53 and 96-99 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

### Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All    b) ☐ Some \*    c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

### Attachment(s)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)          | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)           |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____                                      |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)          | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____  | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                          |

**DETAILED ACTION*****Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114***

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 02/11/2008 has been entered.

Claims 2-15, 21-24, 26-34, 40-43, 45-53, and 96-99 have been amended. Claims 58-72 are canceled. Claims 2-15, 20-34, 39-53, and 96-99 are pending.

***Response to Arguments***

2. Applicant's arguments with respect to claim 96 and that neither Huang et al. (U.S. 6,151,582) nor Landvater (U.S. 6,609,101) teach a unified causal calendar have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection set forth below, as necessitated by amendment.

3. Applicant's arguments with regards to Huang et al. (U.S. 6,151,582) have been fully considered, but they are not persuasive. In the remarks, applicant argues that (1) as per claim 97, Huang et al. does not teach a unified causal calendar with event types and event type identifiers representing promotions of substitute or complementary products, removal of substitute or complementary products, and new product introduction and (2) Huang et al. does not teach or suggest the limitations of claim 98 and 99 of allocating item inventory, distributing items from a distribution center to stores, bottom-up planning

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of sales, on-hand inventory, and receipt of items into inventory, top down planning that aggregates items at levels higher than individual items, and markdown management.

In response to argument (1), Examiner notes that Silva Risso has been used in the rejections below to address the newly amended unified causal calendar. Further, Huang et al. discloses price promotions, advertising promotions, promotions of substitute or complementary products in column 22, lines 15-30, column 36, lines 50-65, column 54, lines 60-67, column 55, lines 20-33, which discloses price reductions and promotions and causing customers to purchase for example substitute products (instead of what they intended to by) based on these promotions. These sections further disclose advertisements. See also column 13, lines 25-35 and 50-55, column 34, lines 60-67, column 39, lines 60-65, column 55, lines 20-33. See column 13, lines 25-35 and 50-55, which specifically discloses new product release/introduction. Column 22, lines 15-30, column 36, lines 50-65, column 54, lines 60-67, column 55, lines 20-33, which discloses price reductions causing customers to purchase for example substitute products (instead of what they intended to by) as well as phasing out such as item at the end of it's season. Huang further discloses seasonal events and special events in a city that increase customer traffic (See column 19, lines 30-40, column 21, 15-25, column 33, lines 65-67, column 36, lines 60-65, column 54, line 60-column 55, line 20, which discloses seasonal events and special events (like military shows) that increase usage and demand for an item). Therefore, Huang et al. does teach and suggest these limitations.

As per argument (2), Examiner respectfully disagrees. Huang et al. teaches "Allocating item inventory for seasonal **or** fashion items received from suppliers among stores" in column 13, lines 44-55, column 31, lines 19-21, column 33, lines 30-45 and

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line 60-column 34, line 18, column 36, lines 40-67, column 42, lines 20-35, wherein the seasonal items are allocated among outlets of the supply chain. See also figure 4. Huang et al. teaches “distributing items from a distribution center to stores” in at least figure 4, column 6, lines 45-67, column 33, lines 30-45 and line 60-column 34, line 18, column 36, lines 40-67, column 42, lines 20-35, wherein items are distributed from DCs (distribution centers). “Bottom-up planning of sales, on-hand inventory, and receipt of items into inventory” is addressed by Huang et al. in at least column 11, lines 5-16, column 12, lines 50-65, column 20, line 55-column 21, line 30, column 108, lines 15-25, which discloses bottom up planning. See column 34, lines 1-20, column 35, lines 48-60, and column 42, lines 29-55, which discloses on-hand inventory and inventory scheduling and replenishment. “Top down planning that aggregates items at levels higher than individual items” is discloses in column 11, lines 5-16, column 13, lines 10-25, column 21, lines 33-67, column 108, lines 45-51, and also figure 57. Finally “Open to buy management reports that compare future inventory levels aggregated to a department level or higher with budgeted levels of inventory investment” are addressed in column 10, lines 45-50, column 21, lines 20-30, column 107, lines 45-55, column 108, lines 25-42, which discloses budget concerns. See also figures 56-60.

As for Markdown Management, see column 22, lines 5-35, column 33, lines 65-67, column 36, lines 50-65, column 109, lines 30-60, of Huang et al. which discloses a promotional calendar with scheduled dates and sell out by dates that are managed. See column 54, lines 49-67, which discloses outputting analysis of promotional effects, which includes reducing a price by a given percentage. Silva Risso is now relied upon to disclose markdown management recommends timing and level of markdowns (See pages

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290 and 294). The discount % and the timing and amount of markdowns is accounted for in the reference.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. Claims 6-11, 20, 25-34, 39-39, 44-53, and 96-99 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Huang et al. (U.S. 6,151,582) in view of Silva-Risso (*Decision Support System for Planning Manufacturers' Sales Promotion Calendars*).

As per claim 96, Huang et al. teaches a computer-implemented method of generating reports from forecasted unit inventory and unit sales on a bottom-up per store basis for a multitude of items at a plurality of stores, including:

Unifying treatment of events that impact demand across the items and the stores and that impact particular items at particular stores by tracking a plurality of promotion events and a plurality of non-promotion events with a unified causal event calendar (See column 13, lines 27-35, column 18, line 45-column 19, line 10, column 22, lines 6-38 (specifically 6-15, 20-22, and 34-35), column 33, lines 65-67, column 34, lines 15-20, column 37, lines 39-46, which discloses event calendars with types of events that include good identifiers, dates, and event type data. See figures 56-60 and specifically figure 58,

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column 109-110, which disclose promotional calendars that show periods of promotional events and the impact of these promotions are displayed),

said causal event calendar, which is a data structure stored in computer readable memory, wherein an event data tuple for an event in the causal event calendar includes at least a good identifier, a start date, a stop date and an event type identifier (See column 13, lines 27-35, column 18, line 45-column 19, line 10, column 22, lines 6-38 (specifically 6-15, 20-22, and 34-35), column 33, lines 65-67, column 34, lines 15-20, column 37, lines 39-46, which discloses event calendars with types of events that include good identifiers, dates, and event type data. See also column 42, lines 20-35, column 53, lines 49-58, and column 54, lines 40-67, column 109, lines 30-52);

Forecasting unit inventory and unit sales at a per-item, per-store level using the causal calendar by identifying one or more events applicable to an item-store pair and using event type identifiers for applicable events to automatically select demand modifiers that correspond to demand impacts caused by the events (See column 13, lines 1-10 and 27-35, column 18, line 45-column 19, line 10 and lines 48-58, column 55, column 57, lines 13-35, and column 109, lines 20-30 and 46-61, which discloses making inventory determinations using the data stored and expected demand impacts. See figures 56-60 and specifically figure 58, column 109-110, which disclose promotional calendars that show periods of promotional events and the impact of these promotions are displayed);

Generating, from results of the forecasting using the causal event calendar consistently across analytical tool, analytical reports for ordering, distributing, and bottom-up planning prepared using at least some of the per-item, per-store level event

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detail from the causal calendar (See column 11, lines 5-16, column 106, lines 60-67, column 107, lines 37-55, column 108, lines 15-25 and 33-45, column 109, lines 45-60, which discloses generating reports. See also figures 56-60, column 11, lines 5-16, column 12, lines 50-65, column 20, line 55-column 21, line 30, column 108, lines 15-25, which discloses bottom up planning).

However, Huang et al. does a store identifier is stored in association with a retail event type or that the causal calendar shows both promotion and non-promotion events.

Silva-Risso discloses store identifiers and causal calendars shows both promotion and non-promotion events (See page 275, column 1, page 290, figure 4, and page 294, figure 5, which shows calendars that includes both promotion and non-promotion events. The calendars are produced for specific stores. See also at least pages 274-275)

Both Huang et al and Silva Risso are concerned with the impact of promotions on sales at stores. Huang et al. specifically discloses retail outlets and using a promotional calendar that considers type of promotion, promotion dates, impact of promotion, etc. Silva Risso discloses producing a calendar that includes both promotion and non-promotion events. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include the calendar of Silva Risso in the system of Huang et al. in order to achieve the predictable results of forecasting demand based on associated impact factors.

As per claim 97, Huang et al. teaches event types with corresponding event type identifiers, events involving decisions by a retailer and exogenous factors, wherein the decisions by the retailer include price promotions, advertising promotions, promotions of substitute or complementary products, removal of substitute or complementary products



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from a selling assortment, and new product introduction (See column 13, lines 25-35 and 50-55, column 22, lines 15-30, column 34, lines 60-67, column 36, lines 50-65, column 39, lines 60-65, column 54, lines 60-67, column 55, lines 20-33, which discloses price reductions, ads, people buying substitute products, and new products being introduced);

The exogenous factors include seasonal events and special events in a city that increase customer traffic at a store (See column 19, lines 30-40, column 21, 15-25, column 33, lines 65-67, column 36, lines 60-65, column 54, line 60-column 55, line 20, which discloses seasonal events and special events (like military shows) that increase usage and demand for an item).

However, neither Huang et al. nor Silva Risso expressly disclose that the promotional and seasonal events include holiday events.

Both Huang et al and Silva Risso are concerned with the impact of promotions on sales at stores. Huang et al. specifically discloses retail outlets and using a promotional calendar that considers type of promotion, promotion dates, impact of promotion, wherein the promotional calendar considers price promotions, advertising promotions, promotions of substitute or complementary products, and new product introduction. Silva Risso discloses producing a calendar that includes both promotion and non-promotion events, wherein the promotions include temporary price reductions and featured ads. Examiner takes official notice that holiday events are old and well known types of promotions. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include holidays in the seasonal events of Huang et al. in order to more accurately account for types of activities that would cause fluctuations in demand patterns, thus allowing the user to better plan for demand.

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As per claim 98, Huang et al. teaches wherein generating analytical reports consistently using the causal calendar data structure further includes reports to support:

Ordering items from suppliers (See column 7, lines 15-21, column 13, lines 44-55, column 31, lines 19-21, column 33, lines 30-45 and line 60-column 34, line 18, column 36, lines 40-67);

Allocating item inventory for seasonal or fashion items received from suppliers among stores (See column 13, lines 44-55, column 31, lines 19-21, column 33, lines 30-45 and line 60-column 34, line 18, column 36, lines 40-67, column 42, lines 20-35, wherein the seasonal items are allocated among outlets of the supply chain. See figure 4);

Distributing items from a distribution center to stores (See figure 4, column 6, lines 45-67, column 33, lines 30-45 and line 60-column 34, line 18, column 36, lines 40-67, column 42, lines 20-35, wherein items are distributed from DCs (distribution centers)),

Bottom-up planning of sales, on-hand inventory, and receipt of items into inventory (See column 11, lines 5-16, column 12, lines 50-65, column 20, line 55-column 21, line 30, column 108, lines 15-25, which discloses bottom up planning. See column 34, lines 1-20, column 35, lines 48-60, and column 42, lines 29-55, which discloses on-hand inventory and inventory scheduling and replenishment);

Top down planning that aggregates items at levels higher than individual items (See column 11, lines 5-16, column 13, lines 10-25, column 21, lines 33-67, column 108, lines 45-51, which discloses top down planning);

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Open to buy management reports that compare future inventory levels aggregated to a department level or higher with budgeted levels of inventory investment (See column 10, lines 45-50, column 21, lines 20-30, column 107, lines 45-55, column 108, lines 25-42, which discloses budget concerns);

markdown management that manages timing and level of markdown of seasonal items in order to sell out available inventory by a predetermined out date (See column 22, lines 5-35, column 33, lines 65-67, column 36, lines 50-65, column 109, lines 30-60, which discloses a promotional calendar with scheduled dates and sell out by dates that are managed. See column 54, lines 49-67, which discloses outputting analysis of promotional effects, which includes reducing a price by a given percentage).

However, while Huang et al. discloses markdown management that manages timing and level of markdown, Huang et al. does not expressly disclose that the markdown management recommends timing and level of markdowns.

Silva Risso discloses markdown management recommends timing and level of markdowns (See pages 290 and 294).

Huang et al. discloses a system that manages a promotional calendar, the promotional calendar including price reductions (markdowns). The system helps the user consider past sales to determine future demand and make inventory decisions. Silva Risso discloses an optimal plan for markdowns. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include making recommendations in the markdown management of Huang et al. in order to efficiently and accurately determine the inventory levels needed to meet the demand during the promotion by fully considering the impact of such a promotion.

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Claim 99 recites substantially similar limitations to claim 98 and is therefore rejected using the same art and rationale set forth above.

As per claim 6, Huang et al. teaches wherein the attributes of the causal calendar further includes an impact estimate quantity corresponding to the impact of the event on sales (See column 22, lines 5-38, and column 109, lines 35-60, which discloses impact factors).

As per claims 7-8, Huang et al. teaches wherein the analytical tools are adapted to basic retail goods and to seasonal retail goods (See column 6, lines 1-20 and 55-65, column 7, lines 5-22, column 12, lines 25-50, column 36, lines 60-65, which discloses goods of retailers and goods that are associated with seasons. See also claim 97 above, which addresses seasons and seasonal items).

As per claim 9, Huang et al. teaches wherein the analytical tools are adapted to basic retail goods and to seasonal retail goods (See column 6, lines 1-20 and 55-65, column 7, lines 5-22, column 12, lines 25-50, column 36, lines 60-65, which discloses goods of retailers and goods that are associated with seasons. See also claim 97 above, which addresses seasons and seasonal items). However, neither Huang et al. nor Silva Risso expressly disclose fashion retail goods.

Both Huang et al and Silva Risso are concerned with the impact of promotions on sales at stores. Huang et al. specifically discloses retail outlets and using a promotional calendar that considers type of promotion, promotion dates, impact of promotion, wherein the promotional calendar considers price promotions, advertising promotions, promotions of substitute or complementary products, and new product introduction. Silva Risso discloses producing a calendar that includes both promotion and non-

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promotion events, wherein the promotions include temporary price reductions and featured ads. Examiner takes official notice that fashion items are items that are affected by the change in season. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include fashion items in the items of Huang et al. affected by seasonal factors in order to more accurately account for all factors that would cause fluctuations in demand patterns, thus allowing the user to better plan for demand.

As per claim 10, Huang et al. teaches wherein the analytical tools operate on daily or more frequent period forecasts (See at least column 8, lines 1-25, which discloses daily).

As per claim 11, Huang et al. teaches wherein the analytical tools operate on weekly forecasts (See at least column 7, lines 50-52, and column 8, lines 1-25, which discloses weekly).

As per claim 20, Huang et al. teaches wherein the analytical reports include open to buy reports (See column 10, lines 45-50, column 21, lines 20-30, column 107, lines 45-55, column 108, lines 25-42, which discloses budget concerns).

Claims 25-34 recite equivalent limitations to claims 6-15, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale set forth above.

As per claim 39, Huang et al. teaches wherein the analytical reports include a promotions management report (See column 11, lines 5-16 and column 54, lines 49-67, which discloses outputting analysis and reports of promotional effects, which includes reducing a price by a given percentage).

Claims 44-53 recite equivalent limitations to claims 6-15, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale set forth above.

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6. Claims 2-5, 12-15, 21-24, and 40-43 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Huang et al. (U.S. 6,151,582) in view of Silva-Risso (*A Decision Support System for Planning Manufacturers' Sales Promotion Calendars*) and in further view of Landvater (U.S. 6,609,101).

As per claims 2-5, Huang et al. discloses a plurality of retail event types that have different impacts on demand, wherein an event data tuple for an event in the causal event calendar includes at least a good identifier, a start date, a stop date and an event type identifier (See column 13, lines 27-35, column 18, line 45-column 19, line 10, column 22, lines 6-38 (specifically 6-15, 20-22, and 34-35), column 33, lines 65-67, column 34, lines 15-20, column 37, lines 39-46, which discloses event calendars with types of events that include good identifiers, dates, and event type data. See also column 53, lines 49-58, and column 54, lines 40-67, column 109, lines 30-52). Huang et al. further discloses retail outlets (See column 42, lines 20-35). Huang et al, further discloses product groups and product families (See column 8, lines 1-5 and 30-35, column 10, lines 55-65, column 19, lines 30-55, column 20, lines 33-35, column 40, lines 45-50).

However, neither Huang et al. nor Silva Risso expressly disclose the specific details of the association between a product or products and a location or locations, as per claims 2-5.

As per claim 2, Landvater teaches wherein a pair of the good identifier and event type identifier attributes associate a single good at a single store with one of the plurality of events (See figures 10, 16-17, and 19-21, column 11, line 53-column 12, line 40, and

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column 17, lines 5-55, which discusses a good and an event, such as promotions, holidays, displays, etc.).

As per claim 3, Landvater wherein a pair of the good identifier and event type identifier attributes associate a single good at a group of stores with one of the plurality of events (See column 8, lines 5-25, column 11, lines 20-32, column 17, lines 35-57, column 19, lines 5-17, which discuss individual goods at multiple selling locations, and overriding occurs. Specifically, when an event works better at one location than another, inventory is balanced).

As per claim 4, Landvater teaches wherein a pair of the good identifier and event type identifier attributes associate a group of goods at a single store with one of the plurality of events (See column 5, lines 1-5, column 8, lines 5-25, column 11, lines 20-32, column 15, lines 25-45 and 55-65, column 17, lines 35-57, column 19, lines 5-17, wherein goods are grouped and projected across the retailers while also considering events, such as promotions, displays, etc.).

As per claim 5, Landvater discloses wherein a pair of the good identifier and event type identifier attributes associate a group of goods at a group of stores with one of the plurality of events (See column 5, lines 1-5, column 8, lines 5-25, column 11, lines 20-32, column 15, lines 25-45 and 55-65, column 23, lines 45-65, which discusses group products and events such as displays).

Huang et al. and Silva Risso are combinable for the reasons set forth above. Further, both Huang et al and Landvater disclose determining product and inventory needs for periods of promotions. Huang et al. specifically discloses retail outlets and using a promotional calendar that considers type of promotion, promotion dates, impact

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of promotion, etc. Landvater specifically discloses multiple retail stores in the supply chain, and using product/location data. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include specifics of product/location identifiers (i.e. single product-single location, single product-multiple location, multiple product-single location, and multiple product-multiple location) associated with the promotional events of Huang et al. in order to more efficiently keep track of the unique and specific needs of specific locations. See column 17, lines 35-57, column 19, lines 5-17, of Landvater.

Claims 12-15 recite equivalent limitations to claims 2-5, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale set forth above.

Claims 21-24 recite equivalent limitations to claims 2-5, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale set forth above.

Claims 40-43 recite equivalent limitations to claims 2-5, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale set forth above.

### ***Conclusion***

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Cunningham et al. (U.S. 6,029,139) teaches optimizing promotional sales and scheduling promotional plans and their effects.

Singh et al. (U.S. 7,080,026) discloses demand forecasting including forecasting for causal and seasonal effects.



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Woo et al. (U.S. 6,910,017) teaches demand forecasting and planning for fashion goods.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Beth Van Doren whose telephone number is (571) 272-6737. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 8:30-5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/B. V. D./  
April 28, 2008

/Beth Van Doren/  
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3623